

**Veterans’ Service-Related Ailments Task Force
Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2022, 12pm-2pm**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- a. Meeting called to order by William Sutton 12:04pm.
- b. Roll call taken and quorum was established with 8 members at roll call.
- c. IDVA staff members present: Kourtney Hopkins, Director Prince.
- d. Kwame Crawford joined as guest.
- e. Introduction of newly appointed Task Force member, Nikita Richards.

Senator Wilcox	Present
Representative Kifowit	Present
Representative Swanson	Present
Director Prince or designee	Present
COL John Fulk	Not Present
Christopher Spears	Not Present
Nikita Richards	Present
Kimyada Wellington	Present
Michael Iwanicki	Present
Michelle Ramlow	Not Present
Summer Padoan	Joined at 12:13
Eric Peterson	Not Present
William Sutton	Present
VACANT	VACANT
VACANT	VACANT

2. Reading and Approval of Minutes from August 8, 2022

- a. William Sutton- Task Force members confirmed receipt and review of meeting minutes from August 8, 2022, with no objections. Meeting minutes approved.

3. Old Business

a. Re-entry to Illinois Program

- i. Representative Kifowit- I volunteered to be a Co-chair on this I have been busy, however, the main structure is simplistic- establish a system to reach out to veterans coming back into town. I have reached out to community colleges who confirmed they ready and willing to work with us, but the question remains- How do we reach the veterans?
- ii. Summer Padoan joined at 12:13pm
- iii. Sutton- I mentioned it to the VFW and everyone seems to want to help. Hardest part is how to we capture the veterans when the return. Can we put it on IDVA’s website? How do we

- reach them? It's hard if nobody knows where to go to when they don't know where to get that information? Next time I go on the radio we can mention it on the radio. Reserve, NG, social media, how do we reach them?
- iv. Representative Kifowit-I read an article about voluntary disclosure about where they are returning. IDVA does a welcome letter. Community colleges are a resource, everyone knows where their community college is; we can give a schedule in the welcome letter? Ideally, we would want to reimburse the veteran for their gas and travel expenses but with the way the states codes are I don't know if that's possible.
 - v. Nikita Richards- Is it possible to take a multifaceted communications approach William and Representative Kifowit and include prep communication prior to discharge? Six weeks before discharge service members are swamped but maybe we can get messaging to them and follow that up in the welcome letter, communication outlets and social media. Can that be a part of this plan as well?
 - vi. Sutton- Any plan is a good plan right about now. Whatever we can do to get that information out there.
 - vii. Anthony Vaughn- That approach would be great. Are we targeting Active duty or Reserve and NG? Knowing when Reserve and NG are returning would be easy but when we are talking about active duty it would be difficult. It would be difficult for active duty because they are coming from all over the world. With respect to that, that would primarily be the function of the welcome home letters based on the individuals who gave us the discharge letters. When we start talking about planning later, this should be twice a year event then put it out on social media for those who separated in the last 18-24 months.
 - viii. Richards- Completely agree.
 - ix. Senator Wilcox- One of the things you do when returning to Illinois is get a driver's license. We get a low uptake on the number of veterans who get veterans on their license due to validation process time. Why can't the SOS get access to access to the VA database so they can validate? Do we have a SOS contact that would take that on and collaborate?
 - x. Vaughn- There is already connection between SOS and IDVA and the individual does not have to go to IDVA to get their DD214 certified. IDVA has an MOU with SOS in which SOS asks for the individual's records and electronically there is a match done with SOS and IDVA databases so that we can confirm the veteran's status.
 - xi. Senator Wilcox- I will confirm that is the case when I go in myself in few weeks. I don't recall this being the process previously.
 - xii. Vaughn-correct that was not the process four years ago. You still need to have your DD214 with you.
 - xiii. Richards- Just to clarify- Now the process is that veterans can go the SOS office and get the veteran designator that day without going through several steps?
 - xiv. Vaughn-The DD214 still needs to be certified but rather than getting the DD214 certified before going to the DMV the individual can bring the paper copy to the DMV and it would be accepted. During the time that the license is being prepared there is a data match that is being done with us to confirm veteran status. If we can't match the data, we have someone reach out to that person.
 - xv. Representative Kifowit- I just wanted to add that that that was my bill. It got signed into law working with Secretary White. That was done to help our veterans.
 - xvi. Representative Kifowit-Passive initiatives fall to the wayside we need to have an active outreach. We need to have the fellowship and expand the program by having active

fellowship with the military community coming together twice a year rather than a piece of paper. How do we get the data? We talk about this every month. Once we have the data we can work on the outreach. Then we can work on the funding, logistics, etc. This would be more hands on and add a resource fair presentation and potentially a lunch. Question is how we get the system of the data to get to the veterans?

- xvii. Sutton- always turn to Mike Iwanicki about data...
- xviii. Kwame Crawford- I have a quick question as we are talking about how to reach the most veterans- is it an existing policy that they are directed to do these things as they are coming out or is it possible to have the adjutant generals to do an all-guard comms communication or make that a directive for people to do these things?
- xix. Sutton- Good question
- xx. Representative Kifowit- NG here in Illinois we can reach out to them as they are doing more retirement things for the guard. TAPS is not specific to state, it is generic. I defer to Representative Swanson who has been focusing on guard initiatives.
- xxi. Representative Swanson-many NG members leave without being eligible for benefits. What we need it a requirement upon retirement for those soldiers and airmen who leave the guard to go through a transition program. Maybe Anthony will have more information on this. As we look at this when we look at guard retirement we want to track and provide assistance as needed, even to those who served on orders or deployed, we want to track and provide assistance to all of them. I am trying to encourage the guard to have these more frequently and outside of Springfield to catch a larger audience. I know when I left the Army, I was encouraged to take my DD214 to the local county courthouse to be recorded.
- xxii. Crawford- If I may clarify- the reason for my question was to really- we have all gotten out and had different experiences. For example, I didn't have that exit information but if it were a directive from the folks in the guard then their commanders might have more of a real charge to make sure that something small is taking place when they come back. Even if they had some of this information it might disseminate amongst the Soldiers. A directive would be something to consider.
- xxiii. Representative Swanson- When Reservist and Guard members return, they go through a training cycle. I retired left the military for the 3rd time in 2014 and Congress now requires military branches to provide a letter that they did attend the TAP course that is offered by that branch of service.
- xxiv. Sutton- after hearing everybody two times a year sounds like the right frequency for an event. I can reach out to MEPS to see if they can disperse the information and still work with the National Guard and Reserves to get information out to them. Hardest part will be to get it going. It is going to spread after that.
- xxv. Anything else for the reentry to Illinois program?

b. Training and Outreach to veterans

- i. Padaoan- This group is focusing on all veterans, regardless of separation dates. There is a transition class that is held in great lakes that our office participates in. They do get members that are separating from all over. This is an option, but it is hit or miss. Our group has talked about a few things, similar in discussion, but we talked about a large possible state sponsored event. The event would be held throughout the state to set up resource fair. For example, organizing veteran organizations and all the events that are being held

and consider combining them and help to capture veterans. If the state were to sponsor the event, the state could help with marketing through Radio, billboard, podcasts, letting the veterans know that VA claims exists. Hopefully getting the state to sponsor targeted ads would help reach more veterans including National Guard and Reservists. Another thing is state sponsored surveys using SOS and IDVA databases to address what benefits have veterans applied for, are veterans aware they can file a claim, did the veteran file a claim on their own, etc. If we use a survey, we can narrow down why Illinois veterans are lower. I.e. are they doing it on their own? Another comment is to use electronic social media targeted ads to reach younger generations. YouTube Facebook Twitter and using different topics and using state support to promote and provide those. Some veteran organizations are dwindling, having younger members know they can be in those organizations so that they can be involved. Additionally, consider having a state sponsored veteran organization list where different veteran organizations can connect with this membership to be listed with this resource where it listed, like IJF but next level but where the state manages the lists and organizations would apply to become a part of a coalition of the resource list to promote their businesses. In turn, this membership/list would be used to drive larger quarterly events.

- ii. Kimyada- great job, Summer. I don't have anything to add.
- iii. Sutton-Great job taking the lead on this.
- iv. Iwanick- Multifaceted multimedia approach to this. We must give them a sense of trust in the veteran service officer so that they will come in and talk to a VSO.
- v. Padoan-anything to add? We are using Eric's event in Kankakee as reference; any other events to use as reference would be helpful too?

c. Training and Outreach for VHA providers

- i. Summer- Main issue with VHA provider is that we try to get veterans to get documentation from their doctors to help with a claim and there is a lot of push back and they think they are not allowed to or that there is a conflict of interest. Forming some sort of MOU with VHA so that we can educate providers on why they should how it would help. Next step would be a building MOU, not necessarily something the state would do but it would help. It would vary by facility.
- ii. Sutton-It would be helpful if it would come directly from the facility leadership.
- iii. Padoan- turnover effects that.
- iv. Richards- is it possible for us to work with the staff to have an annual or six-month refresher and reminder so that it does not hurt our client base? If that piece is not enforced these empty mandates are harming the clients.

- v. Sutton- Hitting the nail on the head. I had a client who has been begging his provider to fill out a DBQ and the provider would not do it and patient advocate won't assist. If that is something that can be an annual requirement that would be great.
- vi. Vaughn- Remembering the original intent of the DBQ is to allow the VA to fill this document out and provide with the claim which would prevent to schedule a C&P exam, original push back was that the DBQ would be complete, and the C&P was still going to be scheduled. A lot of coordination that wasn't happening. Does the VA accept DBQ from private physicians? The DBQ has changed from not needing to schedule a C&P to documentation of current conditions.
- vii. Summer-If a DBQ is provided, a rater can make a decision, but 9 times out of 10 they still request a C&P exam.
- viii. Sutton- DBQ helps in the long term because provider is likely a specialist.
- ix. Vaughn- If they are filling out a DBQ, does it require more time?
- x. Sutton-We advise the veterans to inform the providers ahead of time.
- xi. Summer-When we are writing the MOU we will include 6 month or annual reminder.

d.. Training and Incentives for contracted C&P Examiners

- i. Padoan- I reached out to QTC, LHI and did not get any response. I am trying to get information on how many examiners, where they are located. I wanted to send out a survey to ask what types of incentives would be important to them i.e., military sensitivity training, increasing education to them. We did not get a list, so we have not been able to ask.
- ii. Padoan- Is the state able to have incentives? We should try to get more, better private examiners. How can we ask the state to provide incentive to become an examiner? I do not see how it is promoted. How do they promote that this is an opportunity that this is available? Another issue is the distance individuals have to travel.
- iii. Richards- That is exactly right. I have never been to see a VA doctor because it was so inconvenient. Though I have the ability to go to the VA, it was too far and transportation was unreliable and I was young and it was inconvenient. This is a key barrier.
- iv. Crawford- It is a key barrier as we speak to this day. How do we as a state help the federal system navigate this issue?
- v. Sutton- There are C&P examiners in downtown Chicago. Typically, the C&P examiner the veteran gets is the first ones that accepts them, and they will be sent to the next open appointment location.
- vi. Padoan- If they are going to use contractors, we need contractors. How can we promote this? We can ask the state how we can promote this amongst private doctors by adding CEUs or

additional incentives, maybe establishing a medallion program for C&P providers to get them more motivated to do it properly? Another piece to be educated on is how to report bad exams, key things to look for and ways to report them.

- vii. Richards- Where are we with the state regarding the incentive option? Has state been involved in that at all? Will this be a new to our proposal in response to this task force?
- viii. Sutton-Anything else to cover under old business?
- ix. Vaughn- Regarding contractors for C&P exams- Do we know how the VA selects them? Does the VA reach out to them? Does the VA put out a bid?
- x. Padoan- They have a contract with the overall company. For example, VA has a contract with QTC then the provider is contracted with QTC.
- xi. Vaughn-How would QTC get the contract? There would be specific metrics they would have to meet? Anybody they subcontract with would also have to meet their metrics.
- xii. Padoan- They get bonuses for every exam they hold. Will, do you have more information?
- xiii. Sutton- Contractors with QTC, LHI, VAS don't have to requalify. There is no recertification process once they are certified to perform C&P exams.
- xiv. Padoan- I'm not familiar with initial contract.
- xv. Kourtney Hopkins-Can we FOIA the metrics they must meet?
- xvi. Representative Kifowit- Do we want to invite an Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) representative on our next call? Is that something the group would like me to coordinate?
- xvii. Sutton- My opinion, for the whole group no, for Summer, yes. The problem with the recertification is not the state it is with the C&P recertification. If I have a TBI, why am I going to see an GYN?
- xviii. Representative Kifowit- The state can be more stringent but not more relaxed. I can research it. Or you can leave it as a recommendation for more exploration for IDFPR?
- xix. Hopkins- A thought for the group to consider- a lot of veterans may be going out of state for their C&P exams based on our geographical location. The Task Force might want to consider a disclaimer for the report out on veterans going out of state for C&P exams.
- xx. Padoan- I would be open for someone to join for a set time and at the same time, include in the response to consultant with them on a more in-depth level.
- xxi. Representative Kifowit- I can make the request for an overview on the abilities of the state 20 minutes.

4. New Business

- a. Discussion of report outline (Due December 2022)

- i. Sutton- We need to have a draft by next meeting.
- ii. Richards- Can we send copies of the drafts via email or google doc so that when we come to the next meeting we are prepared to discuss.
- iii. Padoan- can anyone jump in on any of the work groups?
- iv. Crawford- which working group has the most need?
- v. Sutton-reentry to Illinois just me and Representative Kifowit.
- vi. Vaughn- I am on as well.
- vii. Padoan- Veterans outreach a lot of different things and we are starting from scratch. So, there is a big need.
- viii. Crawford- feel free to add me.
- ix. Richards-You can add me to Re-entry to Illinois, please.
- x. Sutton- Anyone here that is not on a task force. Mike?
- xi. Iwanicki- yes
- xii. Sutton- Senator Wilcox? Representative Swanson?
- xiii. Swanson- Yes.
- xiv. Representative Kifowit- Do we want to push back the next meeting date?
- xv. Senator Wilcox- Are we going to push for a six-month extension in veto?
- xvi. Representative Kifowit- this is just for recommendations, not necessarily programs. We can bring that up next month with the group and we can put that in Veto.
- xvii. Senator Wilcox- I would be more comfortable asking for six months in veto.
- xviii. Kourtney- we can add as voting item for veto to give legislators as much time as possible for planning purposes.

5. Member Updates

- a. Padoan- Representative Kifowit and Senator Wilcox were recognized with awards from IAVAC for veterans initiatives
- b. Padoan-We heard during our training that Illinois is no longer 52nd we are 50th
- d. Richards- Military Service Academy applications are live. Youth Military Service Academy applications include U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, West Point, and Naval Academy-

amazing opportunity to get collegiate and military experience. We are seeing a lack of diversity in disabled, youth who are marginalized groups, and women. Encourage youth to apply.

e. Kimyada Wellington- Kappa Epsilon Psi Military Sorority, Inc is having a Scholarship Ball on December 3, 2022 6:30pm-12 midnight. Talking about how to reach veterans, social media is it. The community is always saying they heard it from someone else. Talk about breast cancer and military service Grace Project and Athena Division. Group of women being photographed in vulnerable state and Athena division are women in the military. I will share that link.

6. Adjournment

a. Representative Kifowit-motion

b. Iwanicki -second

c. Meeting adjourned at 1:47pm

7. Next scheduled Meeting is October 17, 2022, 12:00pm-2:00pm

8. Resources shared:

a. <https://www.duckworth.senate.gov/help/academy-nominations>

b. https://youtu.be/nALoT_j8mKw